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Estimates in respect of special political missions, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the General Assembly and/or the Security Council

Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

I. Introduction

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered in advance form the report of the Secretary-General on estimates in respect of special political missions, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the General Assembly and/or the Security Council (A/67/346/Add.8). The report contains the proposed resource requirements for the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2013. During its consideration of the report, the Advisory Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information and clarification, concluding with written responses provided on 16 April 2013.

II. Mandate and objectives

2. In paragraphs 1 to 6 of his report, the Secretary-General provides background on the mandate and establishment of the Office. As indicated, during the general debate of the General Assembly held in 2012 the Secretary-General hosted a meeting of Member States focused on bringing attention to the deteriorating humanitarian and security situation in the Sahel region. In response to broad agreement among Member States that the situation in the Sahel posed a threat to international peace and security and needed to be addressed in a comprehensive manner, in October 2012 the Secretary-General appointed a Special Envoy for the Sahel to develop and oversee the implementation of an integrated strategy for

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addressing the root causes of insecurity in the region, particularly under the four pillars of security, governance, humanitarian aid and development, with the issue of respect for human rights cutting across all four pillars. In its resolution 2071 (2012), the Security Council welcomed the appointment of the Special Envoy, stating that he should mobilize international efforts for the Sahel, coordinate the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy on the Sahel and engage actively in defining the parameters of a comprehensive solution to the Malian crisis. The Office of the Special Envoy was established in December 2012, co-located with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Rome.

3. The Secretary-General indicates that the planning horizon for the Office of the Special Envoy is two years starting in January 2013, including continued and concurrent work on (a) the development and refinement of the strategy through extensive consultation; (b) the mobilization of resources to address key challenges facing the region; (c) the coordination of international support around key challenges in the region; and (d) the provision of support to local mechanisms in order to sustain the fundamental and structural changes necessary for long-term stability. He further indicates that, in developing and implementing the integrated strategy, the Special Envoy has commenced consultations with key stakeholders, including Governments of the region, regional organizations, civil society, bilateral and multilateral partners, including international financial institutions, and United Nations actors deployed on the ground. In coordination with national actors, the Special Envoy is also analysing the key challenges in the region and has commenced the process of mobilizing resources for local development efforts and capacity-building in critical areas, such as border control.

4. Information on cooperation between the Office of the Special Envoy and other entities is provided in paragraphs 7 to 9 of the report of the Secretary-General. It is indicated that the Office will receive substantive support and administrative support from the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Field Support, respectively. In the Sahel region, the Office will rely on the existing logistical and administrative capabilities of the regional United Nations presence (the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA), the United Nations Office in Mali (UNOM) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)) to provide critical support and coordination. The Secretary-General also indicates that the Special Envoy and his Office will consult and coordinate activities with the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, UNOWA, UNOM, Resident Coordinators on the ground, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UNDP, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (in line with the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

5. The planning assumptions of the Office for 2013 are set out in paragraphs 11 to 19 of the report of the Secretary-General, and include the following: (a) the principle of national ownership will be the foundation of the strategy; (b) the security situation on the ground must permit the implementation of major efforts under the strategy's four pillars; (c) support for the alleviation of humanitarian crises caused by natural disasters or conflict will remain a priority; (d) the development of the integrated strategy will require consultations with government officials, coordination meetings with key United Nations actors, multilateral events in cooperation with regional organizations and the international community, and

conferences featuring civil society groups, religious and tribal leaders, women, youth and academia; and (e) the mobilization of resources to address the key challenges affecting the Sahel as a region will be achieved through consultations with key donor countries and meetings with major multilateral financial institutions.

6. The Advisory Committee had extensive discussions with the representatives of the Secretary-General, seeking, in particular to gain a clearer understanding of (a) the relationship between the Office of the Special Envoy and other United Nations offices/departments working on Sahel issues; (b) the rationale for establishing the Office in a location far removed from the Sahel region; and (c) whether its location allowed the Office to derive all possible synergies in the implementation of its mandate and fully benefit from the expertise and support structures of the numerous United Nations offices/entities present in the various countries of the region such as UNOWA in Dakar, the United Nations Office in Nairobi and UNOM.[1]

7. The Advisory Committee was informed that since his appointment the Special Envoy had been working closely with all concerned United Nations entities, ensuring that his efforts complemented action taken by the entities of the United Nations system, utilizing the comparative advantages of a high-level envoy in furthering the priorities of the United Nations in the region. It was expected that the Secretary-General would report to the Security Council at the beginning of May 2013 on the development and implementation of a United Nations strategy for the Sahel. The Special Envoy had set out the overarching framework for the strategy, focusing on four thematic areas, namely governance, security, humanitarian aid and development, and four levels of coordination among the international community, Governments of the region, the United Nations system and civil society. In close coordination with the concerned United Nations entities, the Office had commenced work on the formulation of an action plan focused on the four pillars of the strategy, which was complementary to the work of other entities such as UNOWA, the Economic Community of West African States and the African Union, as well as other multilateral and bilateral efforts. The action plan would be finalized after approval of the above-mentioned report by the Security Council. The Office of the Special Envoy would continue to collaborate closely on the implementation of the strategy with concerned United Nations entities, which would sustain the process initiated by the Office in coordination with the Governments of the region.

8. With regard to the logical frameworks, the Advisory Committee sought clarification on the specific objectives and the contribution of the work of the Office of the Special Envoy towards the accomplishment of various activities, including under the following indicators of achievement: (a) on the agreement by all Governments of the region to launch governance reform initiatives; (b) (ii) on the formulation of a regional strategy on border control; (c) on a decreased number of people vulnerable to food insecurity and malnutrition; and (d) (ii) on the initiation of regional infrastructure projects. The Advisory Committee was informed that the Special Envoy would bring his political stature and vast experience on Africa and

[1] In its resolution 2100 (2013) of 25 April 2013, the Security Council decided to establish the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and requested the Secretary-General to subsume the United Nations Office in Mali (UNOM) into MINUSMA, with MINUSMA assuming responsibility for the discharge of the mandated tasks of UNOM, as from the date of adoption of the resolution.

economics to support reforms at the programmatic level, advocating for action at the political level and unblocking political obstacles. **The Advisory Committee emphasizes the importance of formulating indicators of achievement to better reflect what can realistically be accomplished by the Office itself and activities for which the Office could be held accountable.**

9. With regard to the establishment of a global fund to act as a platform for matching needs with resources referred to under indicator of achievement (d) (i), the Advisory Committee was informed that the mobilization of resources presented some challenges in the current global economic situation. In his discussions with several Member States the Special Envoy had been informed that there would be more willingness to provide "in-kind" rather than financial contributions. The fund would therefore also enable such support. Regional development priorities in the Sahel, including infrastructure projects, would need to be discussed and agreed in order to ensure strong ownership by the Governments of the region. The fund would be launched once those regional development priorities were agreed by the Governments of the region.

Location of the Office of the Special Envoy

10. With regard to the decision to locate the Office of the Special Envoy in Rome, the Advisory Committee was informed by the Secretariat that food insecurity was one of the main strategic priorities identified by the Special Envoy and that the placement of the Office in Rome facilitated close coordination and collaboration with FAO as well as with many European donors and partners who play a major role in the Sahel. Furthermore, travel to European donor capitals as well as to the Sahel region was more rapid and cost-effective from Rome than from New York. In addition, co-location with FAO had allowed the Office to be established quickly, and close proximity to the United Nations Logistics Base in Brindisi facilitated smooth operations on an ongoing basis.

11. The Advisory Committee recognizes that there are some operational advantages in a presence in Rome, in particular for the Special Envoy, who is engaged on a "when actually employed" basis and whose work involves fundraising and frequent consultations with European donor countries. **However, the Advisory Committee considers that this does not necessarily require the headquarters of the Office to be located in Rome, or a large share of the staffing of the Office to be located outside the Sahel region**. The Advisory Committee was informed that the staff of the Office travelled frequently to Dakar and other areas of the region to work closely with UNOWA and other concerned United Nations agencies and partners.

12. **Given the broad-based nature of the key mandate of the Office, which is to develop and oversee the implementation of an integrated strategy for addressing the root causes of insecurity in the Sahel region, the Advisory Committee believes that closer proximity to or its placement in the region would allow the Office of the Special Envoy to fully engage and coordinate with the numerous United Nations offices/entities and international actors present in the countries of the Sahel dealing with similar issues. Such proximity would also allow the Office to better share expertise, political analysis and reporting on developments in the region, as well as to take advantage of the comparative advantages of each entity. Furthermore, the Advisory Committee notes that the**

staff of the Office travel frequently to and spend a considerable amount of time in the region. The Committee holds the view that co-location with one of the United Nations offices in the region, for instance, the United Nations Office for West Africa, would allow the Office of the Special Envoy to benefit from its expertise on the region as well as the infrastructure and support available in that office, thereby reducing requirements for substantive and administrative support, official travel, facilities and other operational costs.

13. **In view of the above, the Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly invite the Secretary-General to review the current arrangements for the Office of the Special Envoy and to consider alternative locations of the Office in the Sahel region. In developing his proposals, the Secretary-General should be requested to take full advantage of the opportunities for realizing synergies with the other United Nations entities present in the countries of the region, and avoid all duplicative activity.**

III. Resource requirements

14. The Advisory Committee notes that for the period from October to December 2012 the requirements for the Special Envoy were funded from extrabudgetary resources. As indicated in paragraph 24 of the report of the Secretary-General, pending the preparation and submission of the budget proposal, the initial requirements for the Office of the Special Envoy, starting on 1 January 2013, are being met through a commitment authority granted to the Secretary-General under the provisions of General Assembly resolution 66/249 on unforeseen and extraordinary expenses for the biennium 2012-2013 in the amount of $1,840,300. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that, as at 9 April 2013, expenditure incurred by the Office amounted to $493,300, or 26.8 per cent of the available funding, including $234,200 for staff costs, $48,700 for consultants, and $209,800 for official travel.

15. As indicated above, the Office is co-located with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in Rome. Details on the support arrangements for the Office are provided in paragraphs 17 to 19 of the report of the Secretary-General. The Advisory Committee notes that FAO provides, on a reimbursable basis, the requisite logistical and infrastructure support to the Office, complemented by services rendered by the Global Service Centre at Brindisi.

16. The proposed requirements for the Office of the Special Envoy for the one-year period ending on 31 December 2013 are estimated at $4,094,500 (net of staff assessment), comprising (a) $1,817,100 under civilian personnel costs to provide for a staffing complement of 19 positions (1 Under-Secretary-General, 1 D-2, 3 P-5, 5 P-4, 4 P-3, 1 P-2 and 4 General Service (Other level)) comprising 15 substantive and 4 support positions; and (b) $2,277,400 under operational costs, including provisions for consultants ($790,700), official travel ($674,700), facilities and infrastructure ($195,800), ground transportation ($49,400), air transportation ($126,000), communications ($61,100), information technology ($99,200) and other supplies, services and equipment ($280,500). **The Advisory Committee is of the view that, in general, the proposed staffing and the resources appear high in relation to the activities that can realistically be carried out by the Office, and makes recommendations on specific proposals in the relevant paragraphs below.**

17. Details on staffing requirements are provided in table 2 and paragraphs 26 to 29 of the report of the Secretary-General. In addition, the Advisory Committee was provided with supplementary information containing an organization chart of the Office of the Special Envoy, and a description of the functions of the proposed 19 positions, which is reflected in the paragraphs below. In his report the Secretary-General indicates that the civilian personnel costs take into account phased recruitment for the positions, as well as a 10 per cent vacancy rate for Professional positions and a 5 per cent vacancy rate for General Service positions. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that, as at 11 April 2013, 10 of the 19 positions proposed were encumbered.

Recommendations on positions

18. A total of 14 positions are proposed for the headquarters of the Office in Rome, comprising the Special Envoy (Under-Secretary-General) as Head of Office, engaged on a "when actually employed" basis to provide the leadership and political framework for the implementation of the mandate of the Office; the Office of the Head of Office (5 positions); a Strategy Formulation and Implementation Team (3 positions); a Political Team (3 positions); and a support function (2 positions).

19. In the Office of the Head of Office it is proposed to establish the following positions:

(a) One Head of Office (D-2), responsible for the provision of political and strategic advice to the Special Envoy and management of the Office of the Special Envoy;

(b) One Public Information Officer (P-4), responsible for dealing with all press and public information responsibilities of the Office;

(c) One Special Assistant to the Head of Office (P-3), to perform the functions of Special Assistant as well as those of Humanitarian Affairs Officer;

(d) One Associate Public Information Officer (P-2), to assist the Public Information Officer in the implementation of the communications strategy of the Office;

(e) One Administrative Assistant (General Service (Other level)).

The Advisory Committee is of the view that the workload of the public information and communications functions of the Office could be carried out by one individual. It therefore recommends against approval of the Associate Public Information Officer (P-2) position.

20. For the Strategy Formulation and Implementation Team it is proposed to establish the following positions:

(a) One Senior Political Affairs Officer (P-5), to head the team and oversee the formulation and implementation of the comprehensive strategy for the Sahel region;

(b) One Political Affairs Officer (P-4), to work on strategy formulation and follow up on the implementation of the strategy; assist in the organization of events, conferences and seminars related to the strategy and resource mobilization for its implementation; oversee routine report writing related to the strategy; travel to the

region and other venues as required; and perform the functions of the team leader in his or her absence;

(c) One Reporting Officer (P-3), to draft routine reports on strategy formulation and implementation, travel with the Special Envoy as note taker for his engagement with key stakeholders in and outside the region, and serve as back-up for the Reporting Officer in the Political Team.

The Advisory Committee recommends approval of the Secretary-General's proposals for the Strategy Formulation and Implementation Team.

21. For the Political Team it is proposed to establish the following positions:

(a) One Senior Political Affairs Officer (P-5) to head the team, who would be responsible for following up on the political developments in the countries of the Sahel, the politics of the region and developments in the countries neighbouring the Sahel region;

(b) One Political Affairs Officer (P-4), to follow political developments in all of the countries of the region, and to oversee routine report writing on the political developments in the Sahel, who will spend considerable time in the region following political developments;

(c) One Reporting Officer (P-3), to draft reports on political developments in the region, travel with the Special Envoy as note taker for his engagement with key stakeholders in and outside the region, and serve as back-up for the Reporting Officer in the Strategy Formulation and Implementation Team.

The Advisory Committee considers that many of the functions of the Political Team in the Office of the Special Envoy could be provided through increased collaboration with other United Nations entities present in the region which already devote considerable resources to following up on political developments, as well as through the backstopping capacity at Headquarters, which is also proposed to be strengthened (see para. 24 below). Accordingly, the Committee recommends approval of one Political Affairs Officer (P-4) position. It recommends against approval of the other two positions (one Senior Political Affairs Officer (P-5) and one Reporting Officer (P-3)) proposed for the Political Team.

22. Two positions are proposed to provide support function at the headquarters of the Office of the Special Envoy in Rome, comprising one Administrative Officer (P-4) assisted by one Administrative Assistant (General Service (Other level)) to oversee and coordinate the preparation and implementation of the work programme and budget of the Office, ensure controls and liaise with FAO, Brindisi and Headquarters on administrative and financial arrangements. **The Advisory Committee recommends approval of the Secretary-General's proposals.**

23. Two General Service positions (Other level) are proposed to be assigned to the Global Service Centre to accommodate the increase in workload related to supporting the management of the financial and human resources of the Office of the Special Envoy. **The Advisory Committee considers that the number of positions proposed for administrative support is high compared to the substantive activities of the mission. Furthermore, it is of the view that the outposting of two positions in Brindisi would result in a fragmentation of the support function of the Office, which also receives administrative and logistical**

support from FAO. In this connection, the Advisory Committee recalls that in its report on cross-cutting issues related to peacekeeping operations (A/67/780) it has recommended that the Secretary-General should be requested to clarify the role of the Global Service Centre in providing administrative support to special political missions. **In view of the above, the Advisory Committee recommends against approval of the two General Service (Other level) positions proposed to be assigned to the Global Service Centre in Brindisi.**

24. A total of three positions are proposed for the Africa II Division of the Department of Political Affairs at Headquarters to provide substantive backstopping, as follows:

(a) One Senior Political Affairs Officer (P-5), to function as team leader for the Mali and Sahel team and focal point for Headquarters liaison with the Office of the Special Envoy, responsible for supporting the Office of the Special Envoy in the development of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel, liaising with other team leaders of the Division and other parts of the United Nations system;

(b) One Political Affairs Officer (P-4), to represent the Office of the Special Envoy at Headquarters as necessary, have regular information exchanges with Member States on the Sahel crisis and ensure that Sahel issues are included in the Department's efforts to support the good offices of the Secretary-General and other senior United Nations officials; and monitor developments in Mali, especially as they pertain to regional insecurity;

(c) One Political Affairs Officer (P-3), to draft talking points and fulfil routine reporting requirements; support the preparation of Sahel-related reports of the Secretary-General to the Security Council; and work with staff of the Rome office to provide inputs into the budget planning process.

Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the Africa II Division of the Department of Political Affairs had a staffing component of 19 Professional posts (1 D-2, 1 D-1, 3 P-5, 4 P-4, 4 P-3 and 6 P-2) and 7 General Service (Other level) posts, including the Mali and Sahel team, which comprises one Team Leader (D-1), four Political Affairs Officers (1 P-4, 1 P-3 and 2 P-2) and one Team Assistant (General Service (Other level)). The Committee was further informed that the Division did not have sufficient personnel to meet the needs of the Sahel dossier, which required dedicated resources for conducting regional analysis. The Professional staff members of the Mali and Sahel team were temporarily borrowed from the North, Central and West Africa teams pending the decision of the General Assembly on the current proposals. **While noting the information provided, the Advisory Committee is not convinced that the additional workload for providing substantive backstopping to the Office of the Special Envoy justifies an additional three positions. As indicated in paragraph 21 above, the Committee is of the view that further efforts could be made to increase collaboration with other United Nations entities present in the region and maximize synergies. In view of the above, the Advisory Committee recommends approval of one of the three positions proposed to increase the capacity of the Africa II Division of the Department of Political Affairs. Specifically, the Committee recommends approval of one Political Affairs Officer (P-4) position.**

Recommendations on operational costs

25. The Advisory Committee was provided with further details on the proposed requirements under operational costs, as follows:

(a) Consultants ($790,700), to provide advice and expertise on the Sahel region to the Special Envoy in the formulation and implementation of his integrated strategy for the region, including provisions for (i) eight consultants for 60 days each to support the four pillars (governance, security, humanitarian aid and development); and (ii) two consultants for 120 days each to provide expertise on socioeconomic development in the Sahel;

(b) Official travel ($674,700), to provide for 32 trips for the Special Envoy and the Head of Office, accompanied by one person, between Bologna (the official residence of the Special Envoy) and Rome ($37,800); 7 trips for two staff members to Beijing, Dubai, Jeddah, Moscow and Tokyo ($89,800); 10 trips for two to three staff members to the Sahel region and neighbouring countries ($167,200); and 4 trips each for two to three staff members to Brussels, Geneva, New York and Paris ($150,000). Provisions are also made for travel of other staff of the Office, including 12 trips to the Sahel region and neighbouring countries ($78,800); 8 trips to Brussels, Geneva and Paris ($14,200); 15 trips between Rome and Brindisi ($18,800); and temporary duty assignment of four staff members to Rome and one staff member to Bamako ($118,100);

(c) Facilities and infrastructure ($195,800), to provide for the rental of office space in Rome ($55,200) and New York ($47,700), rental of conference rooms in the Sahel for six events ($15,000), and rental of office space/meeting rooms during the Special Envoy's visits to countries where United Nations country offices cannot provide the premises free of charge ($7,500); acquisition of office furniture and equipment in Rome ($29,700); alteration and renovation services for the office in Rome ($15,000); maintenance services for the office in Rome ($12,000); rental of office equipment ($7,600); and stationery and office supplies ($6,100);

(d) Ground transportation ($49,400), to cover costs of fuel and rental of vehicles and driver for the transportation of the Special Envoy on his official travels to various countries whenever vehicles are not provided by the receiving party, and rental of vehicles for officials visiting the Special Envoy in Rome who have to be provided with official transportation;

(e) Air transportation ($126,000), to provide for the chartering of two special flights within Africa for three days each, for travel by the Special Envoy to several countries in the Sahel region;

(f) Communications ($61,100) to cover costs of commercial communications, including cellular phone charges, reimbursement to FAO for telephone usage, and mail and pouch services ($47,900); acquisition of communications equipment ($6,600); and communication support services, including for videoconferencing services ($6,600);

(g) Information technology ($99,200), to cover costs of rental of equipment ($30,800); acquisition of equipment ($19,300); information technology services ($22,500); acquisition of software packages ($10,000); maintenance and repair of equipment ($8,800); and licences, fees and rental of software ($7,800);

(h) Other supplies, services and equipment ($280,500), to provide for six special events/conferences in the Sahel region, each projected to last two days, including resources for travel and subsistence allowance for participants from representatives of national Governments and civil society, interpretation, visa and protocol services, and secretarial services ($246,000); printing and reproduction ($10,000); official functions ($10,000); hospitality ($10,000); subscriptions ($2,000); bank charges ($2,000); and general insurance ($500).

The Advisory Committee recommends that the resource requirements for operational costs, including official travel, be adjusted to reflect its recommendations in paragraphs 19, 21, 23 and 24 above on the proposed staffing of the Office of the Special Envoy, which would result in a reduction by 7 of the 19 positions proposed. Accordingly, the overall requirements for operational costs would be reduced by $94,800 from a total of $2,277,400 to $2,182,600, comprising $45,900 under facilities and infrastructure, $13,400 under communications, $20,900 under information technology and $14,600 under official travel.

IV. Conclusion

26. The action requested of the General Assembly is set out in paragraph 30 of the report of the Secretary-General. **Taking into account the observations in paragraphs 19, 21, 23, 24 and 25 above, the overall requirements for the Office of the Special Envoy would be reduced by $601,000. Accordingly, the Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly:**

(a) **Approve the 2013 budget for the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel in the amount of $3,493,500 net ($3,647,900 gross);**

(b) **Appropriate, under the procedures provided for in paragraph 11 of annex I to General Assembly resolution 41/213, an amount of $3,493,500 under section 3, Political affairs, and an amount of $154,400 under section 36, Staff assessment, to be offset by a corresponding amount under income section 1, Income from staff assessment, of the programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013.**